

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

## **HJR 17**

*“Encouraging the United States Congress to pass legislation giving full military burial rights to Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War.”*

### **Sponsor Statement**

When the Vietnam War ended, Hmong veterans were promised veteran recognition. HJR 17 encourages the United States Congress to pass legislation granting Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War the full military burial rights they were promised and deserve.

There are an estimated 6,000 Hmong-American veterans living in the United States, with a sizeable number in Alaska. Beginning in the 1960's, the Central Intelligence Agency began recruiting Hmong people to help U.S. soldiers in the fight against communism. Between 1962 and 1975, about 12,000 Hmong soldiers died fighting against the Laotians. After the US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975, the Lao kingdom was overthrown by the communist party and the Hmong became targets. The Hmong people were displaced and forced to relocate from Laos to Thailand, with some ending up in UN refugee camps.

It has been estimated that 30,000 Hmong were killed by the communists while trying to reach refuge in Thailand. All in all, over 100,000 Hmong people died as a result of both the Vietnam and “Secret” Wars.

The Hmong people put their faith and trust in the United States government, which promised them citizenship and veteran status after the war. Over fifty years later, Hmong-American veterans have yet to receive the veteran designation they've earned. We are asking that the promises made to people who risked everything for our country be honored. We owe all our veterans respect for their efforts and sacrifices made on behalf of this great nation. We must recognize how much our Hmong veterans gave and lost for our country. These patriotic individuals deserve to have their services honored with burial benefits in our national cemeteries.

We ask for your support for HJR17, to fulfill a promise fifty years overdue.